

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 5802

To the Housing Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly

Public Hearing – Thursday, Feb. 5, 2015

Dear Co-Chairs and Committee Members,

I am writing to express support for H.B. 5802 and its fundamental concept of exempting any municipality from the affordable housing land use appeals procedure that demonstrates substantial progress over regular intervals toward 8-30g's ten per cent affordable housing threshold.

Municipalities striving to reach 8-30g's ten per cent standard may understandably progress toward that threshold at an irregular pace, as affordable housing development is affected by myriad factors. A municipality's earnest effort to progress steadily toward that standard may not necessarily be reflected by rote calculation of affordable units built by date certain.

Inclusion in 8-30g is needed of additional, more subjective criteria to judge municipal effort to attain the ten percent standard, and resultant progress. I urge the Committee to assign a task force of its members to define criteria other than counted units and calendar dates that can reasonably characterize "substantial" and "steady" progress toward the ten percent standard.

A second suggestion for inclusion in 8-30g is a 6-month moratorium or "cooling off period" following submission of an 8-30g application when requested by petition signed by at least 50 registered voters. During that 6-month period elected officials could confer with the developer and planning commission members to review possible alternative sites that may be more suitable for an affordable housing development. Criteria for suitability would include not only 8-30g's respect for public health and safety, but also concern for compatibility with adjoining land uses and the effect on neighboring property values.

Elected officials could constructively use the 6-month period to assist, and even incentivize, a developer willing to provide needed affordable units without endangering the public, presenting traffic hazards or unnecessarily jeopardizing property values. A 6-month period would enable all parties to scout alternative sites that might better serve the public interest and, where appropriate, allow municipal officials to negotiate land swaps with the developer to relocate the affordable proposal to a preferred site.

Respectfully submitted,

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